United Nations S/2018/701

Security Council

Distr.: General
18 July 2018
English
Original: French

Letter dated 12 July 2018 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter from the Union of Medical Assistance and Care Organizations dated 11 July 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) François **Delattre**

18-11969 (E) 190718 190718

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 12 July 2018 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English]

We write to you with great urgency concerning the dangerous situation in southern Syria and the uncertain fate of civilians seeking safety and protection in Dar'a and Qunaytirah. Despite the recent signing of a "reconciliation" deal to end the weeks of aerial bombardment in southern Syria, independent humanitarian aid agencies continue to struggle to meet the growing demands of civilians displaced and residents in urgent need of food, water, shelter and health care. We are gravely concerned for the safety and security of those who are making the difficult journey back home in the absence of any guarantees for their protection, as well as the many medical personnel who selflessly chose to remain on the ground during the intense bombardment and are now seeking urgent evacuation.

The recent military campaign in southern Syria heavily damaged civilian infrastructure, putting many medical facilities out of service. In the past week, three of our humanitarian workers in the Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations have been killed. Now, in the aftermath of the reconciliation agreement, many of our colleagues in Dar'a and Qunaytirah are requesting urgent and safe evacuations. At present, at least 26 doctors and 30 Union staff are seeking immediate evacuation, along with their family members. With no guarantees for their safety, they fear for their lives and the lives of their loved ones if they remain.

We must be clear that the death, destruction and suffering in Dar'a and across Syria were and remain entirely preventable. We understand the challenges on the ground and the difficult policy options with which you are faced, but the option of "do nothing" has drastic consequences for civilian lives and medical relief workers in particular, as is now evident in southern Syria. As a minimum, we urge the Security Council, collectively or as individual Member States, to call on Russia and the Syrian authorities to immediately halt the violence and allow humanitarian aid workers free and unfettered access throughout southern Syria, and we call for urgent measures to evacuate our colleagues who wish to leave. We also urge all parties to guarantee the protection of civilians who seek to return to their homes.

In parallel to your political tools, we ask the members of the Security Council to intensify their emergency aid response to groups on the ground providing life-saving support. As humanitarians, it is our duty to do whatever we can to bring to your attention the urgent needs on the ground and to urge the members of the Council to take the steps that will save lives.

Dr. Ghanem **Tayara**
Chair, Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations

Dr. Tawfik **Chamaa**
General Secretary, Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations